

## THE GRAND CANYON

Georgi stays at the hotel on the rim.  
Half a mile down, David shouts,  
"Pick it up, hard-asses!  
We aren't little girls!"  
I know he is remembering  
his patrols on the Mekong.  
He counts off fifty paces a minute,  
like Stillwell coming out of Burma.  
We all laugh as we pass  
the candy-butts ascending on their mules.  
At the bottom we make camp  
by the fast green Colorado.  
Barry gets to be the dishwasher.  
In the evening light  
the pink folds of the walls  
pulse with surface heat.  
As we drink whisky around the fire,  
women are never far from our minds.  
The next day we walk to the waterfall  
where David stands naked  
under the pouring water.  
Coming back, Barry misses his jump  
and falls in the stream.  
On the third day we start up  
Bright Angel Trail.  
"Let's go, pricks! Get it up!"  
The hot water in our canteens  
tastes of plastic.  
Close enough to see  
the windows of the hotel,  
Barry slumps beside the trail.  
He wants us to go on without him.  
"Get up before I kick you up,  
you pussy," David says.  
Barry spits,  
then slowly stands,  
and together we all keep walking.

## WE BUY OUR COUCH

Crazy Bargaining Eddie  
cruises forward in hush puppies.  
Veering between Elaine and me,  
he displays "your tuxedo model,"  
"your flametitch loveseat,"  
and "your sectional sofa."  
When he tells the prices, I ask myself:  
Has the Mafia grabbed the couch industry?



What are twenty yards of cloth  
and a few boards worth?  
But I can't make a couch,  
and we have no place for friends to sit.  
Elaine and I have fought for months  
without guests.  
Eddie asks, "You checked out the mall?  
We beat Dayton's. Hundred bucks.  
Same stuff exactly."  
He's right, but I can see  
he isn't happy.  
He wishes he had a department store  
so he could put his furniture  
in delicate make-believe rooms  
instead of shabby rows.  
Besides, the nice stores make better dough.  
Is it his fault  
he's Crazy Bargaining Eddie?  
He sits with me on an overstuffed green divan.  
He knows I want to buy and get out.  
But Elaine balks. These couches aren't right.  
She has dreamed of having one  
since she was a girl.  
They mean something  
I can't understand.  
"We've looked long enough," I say.  
Crazy Bargaining Eddie averts his eyes  
while Elaine agrees.

#### REMEMBERING THE TIDY TOWN LAUNDROMAT

Machinery has driven us bozo, that's clear.  
Why else would every house in this neighborhood  
have a washer-drier used just four hours a week?  
We all look normal enough, in our clean outfits,  
but we've lost the guts to wash together.  
I remember my old laundromat in Palo Alto.  
It was easy enough, I tell you,  
to learn not to put your hand  
in the SpeedQueen with the spastic agitator.  
Where else would I have met  
the nice old lady  
whose T-shirt read, "Sit on it!"  
Where else would I have learned  
the correct response to, "Cochino,  
deme todo su dinero, pronto!"  
And where else would I have become friends  
with the man with half a face.  
No more reaching under my chair  
to find a petrified village of chewing-gum.